

Bylaws of the Assistive Technology (AT) Advisory Council

Purpose

- A. The purpose of the Council shall be to provide advice and guidance to the WisTech Program and assure that it is in compliance with the provisions of the Technology Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Act (Tech Act) of 1998 as revised.
- B. Specifically, the Council will provide advice and guidance on the following:
 - Wisconsin's three-year State Plan for Assistive Technology that will be submitted to the federal Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA),
 - monitoring the ongoing progress of the WisTech program according to the three-year State Plan for Assistive Technology,
 - collaborations with other agencies, organizations and bodies providing AT services and devices throughout the State, and
 - program reporting and evaluation of success.

Council Composition Guidelines

- A. The Council shall be composed of no fewer than 9 and no more than 13 members.
- B. Four members of the Council will be appointed per the instructions of the AT Act. These are representatives from:
 - Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
 - Wisconsin Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
 - Council on Workforce Investment
 - Independent Living Centers

The Council will accept the appointee of the aforementioned bodies as an appropriate representative of that organization.

Fifty-one percent of the membership of the Council shall be persons with disabilities who use assistive technology. Of the consumer representatives, the Council will strive for representation from the following disability groups:

- Blind and Visually Impaired
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- Developmental Disabilities
- Chronic and Persistent Mental Illness
- Physical Disabilities

In addition, Council membership will strive for consumer membership representing the following populations of people using assistive technology:

- Representative of people age 60 and older
- Representative of people ages 17 to 23
- Representative of a person with a disability, such as a family member or guardian of a person with a disability who uses assistive technology

- C. WisTech staff shall be ex-officio, non-voting members of the Council. All other members are voting members.
- D. Involvement of non-members from organizations, agencies or vendors providing services to people with disabilities who use assistive technology services and devices will be incorporated into the larger decision-making body of the AT Advisory Council through active membership on Ad-hoc committees.
 - Ad-hoc Committees must include at least two members from outside the AT Advisory Council. The Council members on the Committees will be volunteers. In the absence of volunteers, members will be appointed by the chairperson.
- E. Membership on the Council will seek to have representation that is geographically, culturally, racially and gender representative of the state of Wisconsin according to the most recently available demographic statistics from the Department of Health and Family Services.

Council Membership

- A. Appointments shall be made through a majority vote of the Council.
 - 1. Interested consumer candidates will submit the following documentation to the WisTech office at the Department of Health and Family Services:
 - a) Consumer Interest Form
 - b) A resume
 - c) A brief history of the individual's relevant work and personal history
 - d) A description of the individual's participation on other boards and councils
 - 2. Recommended appointments will be made to the Secretary through the WisTech Director.
- B. Council members will serve three-year terms.
 - 1. Terms will be randomly staggered for the first Council into two- and three-year terms.
 - 2. Council members will serve no more than two terms, consecutive or otherwise.
 - 3. Term limits apply to all Council members.
- C. Vacancies will remain open until an appropriate candidate is appointed or nominated, and approved by the Council and the Secretary of the Department of Health and Family Services.
 - 1. Council members filling a vacant position with time left in the term will finish the partial term and be eligible for two additional terms.
 - 2. Consumer applications for joining the Council will be accepted at all times and maintained on file by the WisTech Director.
 - a) When the Council decides to solicit applications from consumers, the WisTech Director and the Nominating Committee will develop a

solicitation letter to be distributed to a wide variety of organizations and agencies serving people with disabilities, representing all the disability groups, geographic diversity and age ranges the Council seeks to represent.

- D. Council officers will be nominated by the Nominating Committee.
 - 1. The Nominating Committee will be comprised of at least one appointed member and one consumer member.
 - 2. Additional nominations will be solicited from the floor.
 - 3. Members nominated for an officer position will confirm their interest in serving as an officer before a vote is taken.
 - 4. Officers will be elected through a closed vote of all Council members. Election will be accomplished through a simple majority.
- E. Council members accruing two or more absences during a calendar year may be dismissed from the Council at the discretion of the council at-large.
 - 1. Participation from a remote location does not constitute an absence.
 - 2. Absences accrued due to illness, death or other factors beyond the control of the Council member will not count toward the total of two absences and will be counted as “excused.” The decision to classify a decision as “excused” or “unexcused” is at the discretion of the Chairperson and the Executive Committee.
- F. The Council members will elect the following officers to two-year terms. Officer terms can be extended by one year to coincide with the term of the member.
 - 1. Chairperson
 - a) This officer is responsible for running the meeting, acting as the public face of the Council, being the primary liaison with the Department of Health and Family Services and other duties implicit in leadership of the Council.
 - 2. Vice Chairperson
 - b) This officer will act as the Chairperson in that officer’s absence.

Council Meetings

- A. Meetings of the Council will be held quarterly at locations that are geographically central or acceptable to the majority of the members. The location and date of the meetings will be chosen at the first meeting of the calendar year.
 - 1. Special meetings may be called when three members, or the Chairperson, request a special meeting in writing and submit such a request to the WisTech Director.
 - 2. Attendance rules apply to special meetings.
 - 3. Notice of special meetings must be provided to all Council members ten calendar days prior to the meeting. Notice must include the topic of the special meeting.

- B. Public notice of all meetings will be made according to the regulations of the Department of Health and Family Services.
- C. Decisions of the Council shall be made by the majority vote of members present. Any vote taken shall be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.
 - 1. No decisions of the Council may be acted on unless a quorum is present.
 - a) A quorum is the majority of all positions filled on the Council.
 - 2. No members of the Council shall vote on or attempt to influence any Council determination or deliberation where such action would create a conflict of interest as provided by state or federal law or Department policy.

Council Committees

- A. There will be at least one member of the Council on each ad-hoc committee.
- B. The Council will establish ad-hoc committees to assist in its duties.
 - 1. The Council will solicit involvement from non-Council members representing private industry, and agencies and organizations serving people with disabilities, which are relevant to the charge of the Committee.
 - 2. Actions of committees will be treated as recommendations to the Council at-large.
 - 3. Committees will have specific assignments from the Council. After a committee completes its assignment, it will receive a new assignment or be dissolved at the discretion of the Council.
- C. The Council will have two standing committees, the Nominations Committee and the Executive Committee.
 - 1. Members for the Nominations Committee will be chosen at the first calendar meeting of the year.
 - 2. The Nominations committee will be comprised of three Council members.
 - 3. The Executive Committee will be comprised of by the Council officers and an at-large member.

Amendment of Bylaws

- A. All bylaws will be reviewed annually at the first meeting of the calendar year.
 - 1. Changes to the bylaws will only be enacted through a 2/3 majority vote of the Council.
- B. The Department of Health and Family Services can exercise its right to review and approve the bylaws of the Council.

Definitions

AT Advisory Council – the permanent body that will provide advice and guidance to the WisTech program and assure that it is in compliance with the provisions of the Technology Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities (Tech Act) of 1998 as revised.

Assistive Technology (AT) – any product or piece of equipment used to maintain or improve the functional capabilities of people with disabilities. These devices may be acquired commercially, modified or custom-made. Assistive technologies range from such devices and modifications as motorized wheelchairs, to computers controlled by voice or other special switches and augmentative communication devices, to cars or vans with hand controls or lifts, to hearing aids and accessibility modifications to homes. (Federal definition)

Assistive Technology Service – any service that directly assists an individual with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device. These services may include: evaluation; purchasing, leasing or otherwise providing for the acquisition of AT devices; selecting, designing, fitting, customizing, adapting, applying, maintaining, repairing or replacing; coordinating and using other therapies, interventions or services; and training and technical assistance for the individual and the persons who support them. (Federal definition)